



Report of the Assessment Team on Potential Violence Prevention Activities in Guinea

**Lamine Cisse
Elizabeth Côté
Siba Grovogui
Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff
Dane F. Smith, Jr.**

October 14, 2008

A partnership project of swisspeace and the Alliance for Peacebuilding

Sonnenbergstrasse 17 • P.O. Box, CH-3000 Bern 7, Switzerland •
Tel. +41 (0)31 3301087 • Fax: +41 (0) 31 3301213 •

1320 19th Street NW, Suite 410 • Washington, DC 20036, USA •
Tel : +1.202.822.2047 • Fax: +1.202.822.2049 •

www.beforeproject.org

Table of Contents

Foreword	3
Executive Summary	4
1 Sources of Conflict	1
1.1 Absence of the Rule of Law 1	
1.2 Ethnic 2	
1.3 Security and Defense Forces 4	
1.3.1 Drug Trafficking	5
1.3.2 Former rebels at borders	5
1.3.3 Management of volunteers	5
1.3.4 Ethnic Divisions	5
1.3.5 Inequality of treatment	6
1.3.6 Infrequent and irregular payment of salaries	6
1.3.7 Retirement	6
1.4 Economic hardship and inequity 6	
1.5 External tensions 7	
1.5.1 Sierra Leone	7
1.5.2 Mali: Mandiana-Yanofila	8
1.5.3 Côte d'Ivoire	8
2 Dangers of Violence 2008-2009	9
3 A Preliminary Strategy for Conflict Prevention in Guinea	10
3.1 Mobilize Quickly to Support Legislative Elections 10	
3.2 Strengthening Civil Society Groups 11	
3.2.1 Affirming and Reinforcing the Role of Women	11
3.2.2 Mobilizing Youth for Non-Violence	11
3.3 Realigning the Security Forces with the Nation 13	
4 Factors and Institutions Containing Violence	14
5 Potential Entry Points for Action	17
6 Risks of Action	18
7 Recommendations on Partnership	19
7.1 Guinean Social Forum on the Electoral Process 19	
7.2 Women's Caravan to Promote Fair Elections 20	
7.3 Political Party Training to Build Platforms and Impose Violence-restraining Discipline 23	
7.4 Civic Education and Skills Training for Youth 24	
7.5 Social Support for military families 25	
Appendix I	27
Appendix II	29

Foreword

In early 2008 BEFORE, a joint project by swisspeace and the Alliance for Peace-Building (AfP), selected a Steering Committee for West Africa. The Steering Committee met in May 2008 and proposed that Guinea be the target of an assessment mission to determine the feasibility of conflict prevention projects in that country. Dane F. Smith, a member of the Steering Committee, was asked to lead the mission, which took place September 15-27. The team was fortunate to obtain the services of four key experts: Gen. Lamine Cissé of Senegal, who had recently completed a stint as Special Representative of the U.N. Secretary-General for West Africa; Elizabeth Côté, Director of IFES-Guinea; Dr. Siba Grovogui, a Guinean-American who is Professor of Political Science at Johns Hopkins University, and the Honorable Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, a Commissioner for Human Rights in the Government of Sierra Leone. The West African Network for Peace (WANEP-Guinea) was asked to make arrangements for the team on the ground. Its coordinator, Dr. Karamo Cherif, became a member of the team.

Under its terms of reference, the assessment team was asked to

- Meet with a wide range of stakeholders, including government and political leaders, civil society and the international community;
- Develop an understanding of the origins of possible violence;
- Develop as deep an understanding as possible of conflict in Guinea, drawing on all available sources;
- Outline a direction or preliminary strategy for violence prevention;
- Identify those organizations already taking preventive action, including gaps in action and capacity;
- Identify potential partner organizations and lead organizations for the implementation team.
- and to prepare a report. Dr. Michael Lund provided a very useful set of essential questions for the mission.

The assessment team wishes to thank the many people and organizations it met in Guinea for their candor and hospitality, WANEP-Guinea for its untiring and highly effective coordination of the visit, and Ms. Lotta-Liina Mustonen from the swisspeace secretariat for her superb backstopping.

Executive Summary

Guinea is in transition to a new government. Gen. Lansana Conté, who seized power in 1984 and transformed a military government to a centralized presidential regime with trappings of democracy 1989-1993, is seriously ill with diabetes and reportedly has fewer and fewer moments of lucidity. The bargain struck in February 2007, piloted by the trade unions, civil society and religious groups, for a cabinet government led by an independent reformist prime minister, Lansana Kouyaté, broke down in early 2008. The president and his entourage in fact never accepted the bargain and systematically obstructed the Kouyaté government. Public perception that Kouyaté was favoring his Malinké ethnic group and preparing his own ascension to power, presented the president, unhappy about a competing power center, with the opportunity to dismiss him.

In the absence of coherent presidential decision-making, the state has atrophied. The new prime minister, appointed in June, Ahmed Tidiane Souaré, has a limited writ and is viewed by much of the public as fatally compromised by earlier associations with Conté and as favoring the Fula. Although inflation has moderated over the past year, government coffers are empty. Different groups – the military the police, customs workers, health workers – have gone on strikes settled by promises of increased salaries – which are probably impossible for the state to fulfill. The army, gendarmerie and police are corrupt and frequently arbitrary in their behavior toward the citizenry. Governors, *prefets* and *sous-prefets* receive little guidance from the new Ministry of Territorial Administration and in certain regions of Guinea are dependent on local civil society to govern.

Sources of Conflict

There are multiple sources of conflict in Guinea:

1) Absence of the rule of law. The constitution (la Loi Fondamentale) and the major constitutional texts have not been respected. The courts do not function properly. Political influentials and large traders allied with the state manipulate the system to expand their fortunes. Citizens cannot expect justice from the courts, including in volatile disputes over land. The police lack vehicles and weapons and demand bribes for their services. Policemen commonly extort money from ordinary people, especially women. When a group of people considers itself outrageously wronged, it may attack and pillage symbols of the state, such as governors' offices, *prefets*' residences, or police stations. Such violence is spasmodic and local.

2) Ethnic distrust. Guinea is sharply divided among Susu, Fula (Peulhs), Malinké, and the ethnic groups of the Forest. The Fulas are generally considered to be the largest group and control most trade. (Some argue the Malinké with their various sub-groups are at least as numerous.) Malinké president Sékou Touré's inflammatory charge of a Fula conspiracy in the 1960s led to

savage repression of some of the Fula elite and lingering bitterness. Susus have been advantaged by the Conté government and fear a return to power of the Malinké, who have periodically been the target of the president's wrath. Fula and Susu have clashed in Conakry. Most political parties are ethnic in their orientation. Ethnic stereotypes are a fundamental fact of life in Guinea, but significant episodes of ethnic killings are uncommon. Under a situation of serious instability, however, clashes leading to ethnic cleansing could not be ruled out.

3) Violence by the security forces. Guinea's army, once considered patriotic and reasonably well disciplined, has fallen into disorganization since the mid-1990s. There have been several mutinies over pay and conditions. Following the last episode in May 2008, the state agreed to all demands for pay and benefits. Conflict between the military and police erupted into violence in June 2008, when army elements attacked a police camp, killing 20 or more policemen. The possibility of ethnic violence within the army can also not be excluded. Members of the military observe carefully patterns of promotion and command for signs of ethnic discrimination. A failure to pay military salaries could trigger new violence and possibly a more general uprisings aimed at seizing power.

4) Economic hardship and inequity. Guineans have not benefited from high international prices for bauxite, the major export. Senior government officials have skimmed off the revenue. The population has been buffeted by inflation, particularly in the price for rice, the most basic commodity. Full-time jobs are very scarce, and most Guineans in urban settings survive by living off the informal economy. Nevertheless, the economy is not prostrate. Urban markets are busy and harvests appear promising on top of a good rainy season. Economic inequity may be a more potent trigger, buttressing political inequity as a motive for spasmodic outbursts of violence.

5) External tensions. There are tensions along several borders. The most serious at present stems from the seizure by Guinean military elements of a strip of land in Sierra Leone on the far side of the Makona River boundary. The region is believed to have diamonds. Sierra Leonean citizens lack freedom of movement there. There have been clashes along the Malian border attributed alternatively to disputes over land or cattle rustling. Tensions along the Ivorian frontier related to civil conflict in that country have subsided during the past year, but might ignite again. (The demilitarized zone along the border that contained the Ivoirian rebels no longer exists.) Insurgency in Senegal's Casamance region and political violence in Guinea-Bissau can impinge on the Guinean frontier.

6) Other: Unemployed youth, land disputes, drug trafficking. The educational system functions poorly and fails the youth. Full-time employment is unavailable both for those who are illiterate and those emerging from school at different levels, including university. Guinea's youth appear to have little hope for economic improvement and better governance and seek to leave the

country. Youth are organized in various associations, but subject to ethnic manipulation by political parties. They can be incited to violence by parties or by payments from predatory elements associated with the state. Most of those armed in 2000 after the Liberian attack are still roaming the country. There is trans-generational discord in the neighborhoods of Conakry. Local conflict is generated by uneasy cohabitation between herders and farmers and other land disputes, and, recently, drug trafficking is becoming a significant source of conflict.

Proximate Dangers of Violence

Although there are multiple possible sources of violence, the most likely dangers in the next six months come from three major sources. First, legislative elections, postponed from 2007 and scheduled for the end of the year, are certain to be further deferred. An independent national election commission (CENI) has been established. It has branches at the prefectural, sub-prefectural and the communal level. Biometric voter registration “kits” have been distributed throughout the country by CENI officials, and awareness outreach campaigns have been launched. Banners are visible in Conakry and some other urban centers announcing revision of electoral rolls. However, the state has not announced a specific date for elections, and the census required by the electoral code, which should have started months ago has yet to begin.

There is pervasive cynicism about the willingness of the state to hold elections. The president and his entourage have no interest in the formation of a new legislative body, which would challenge their authority. The National Assembly leadership and members are in no hurry to place themselves before voters who would probably replace many of them. The President of the National Assembly, the ailing Mohamed Aboubakar Somparé, clings to his position as constitutional successor to the presidency. The Minister of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs has no electoral experience and his ministerial team lacks the neutrality needed to run a free and fair election. He is reputed to be the president’s man and his collaboration with the CENI is sketchy. State representatives with whom the team met made a point of saying that the elections must be carefully prepared and that the financial means are lacking. The prime minister has not set a date. There are widespread expectations that the elections will be delayed into 2009. A delay beyond February 2009 is likely to lead to violence, according to a number of our interlocutors.

Second, the death of the president before elections would trigger the constitutional provision that the president of the National Assembly would assume the presidency for 90 days, during which national elections would be organized. There is an outside possibility, if the Speaker moved forward quickly and credibly with the electoral process, that the constitution would be respected. However, few among the political party representatives and other observers we spoke with believe that will happen. Most predict the army, or army elements, would intervene to seize power. That would likely generate demonstrations from the political parties and quite

possibly extensive retaliatory violence against civilians, as different elements scramble for power.

Third, there is always the possibility that soaring prices of essential commodities, particularly rice, and a resurgence of widespread unrest could ignite a popular insurrection and demands that the president leave office, as in 2007.

Conflict Prevention Approach

The most urgent element of a conflict prevention strategy is support for fair elections. Although preparations have been launched, there are grave doubts that the CENI will be permitted to play its independent role. An approach supportive of free elections would require quick mobilization of outside resources to create the necessary partnerships and finance an intervention within the next 2-3 months.

A less urgent but more comprehensive approach would involve supporting Guinean civil society in forging and deepening a consensus about the mode of creation of a successor government, democratically elected and characterized by respect for human rights and the rule of law. The international community should assist Guinea by partnering with civil society promoting reform of state institutions, political parties and the security forces.

Factors Helping to Contain Violence

That Guinea has not fallen into civil war like Liberia and Sierra Leone suggests there are factors containing violence. There is a set of attitudes, a collective mental framework, restraining generalized violence: national pride about Guinea's leadership role in African decolonization and desire to preserve the nation, a desire to avoid the disastrous path followed by Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire and fear of the fragmenting consequences of ethnic violence. Institutionally, the most important peace promotion factor is the growth and proliferation of civil society. Over the past two decades donors, international NGOs and regional bodies have sponsored hundreds of training courses, workshops and other initiatives exposing Guineans to outside ideas about constitutionalism, human rights, the rule of law, and the responsibilities of citizenship. Moreover, recent crises have spurred the emergence to leadership of civil society groups at the national level. These include

- The National Council of Guinean Civil Society Organizations (CNOSCG)
- The trade union alliance (*Intercentrale syndicale*)
- The interethnic Committee of Elders (*Comité des Sages*)
- West African Network for Peace/Guinea (WANEP), linked to ECOWAS.
- The Guinean Organization for Human Rights (OGDH)

- The Mano Women's Peace Network (REFMAP in French), linked to the Mano River Union of Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea and Côte d'Ivoire
- The Center for International Trade and Development (CECIDE), the Civil-Military Committee's implementing partner
- Friends of the Future (*Les Amis du Futur*), a largely student group working in education and health

Certain state institutions are charged with reducing conflict and could play a constructive role:

- Ministry of National Reconciliation, Solidarity and Relations with the Institutions
- Independent National Electoral Commission
- And possibly the Economic & Social Council

And there are also mixed government-civil society organs of some promise such as

- The Civil Military Committee
- The Commission on the Struggle against the Proliferation and Use of Small Arms
- The Commission of Investigation into the Events of January/February 2007

Recommended Areas of Intervention

The team believes several conflict prevention initiatives with Guinean or sub-regional partners warrant the Steering Committee's consideration:

1. Support for a Social Forum, which would assist civil society, including the trade unions and Council of Elders, to mobilize rallies and meetings pressing for prompt implementation of the arrangements for free and fair elections. Potential partners: IFES, the CNOSCG, Search for Common Ground, WANEP
2. Financing a coordinator for a 90-day caravan of women's associations, drawing in different ethnic groups, traveling from the Forest Region to Conakry. Potential partners: NDI, WANEP/WIPNET, REFMAP and Guinean organizations such as AGUIFPEG, Club de Femmes, National Council of Women.
3. Training political parties on party platform building and non-violent campaigning, a bottom-up, participatory and consensus-building approach, focused on parties with representation in most of the country. Potential partners: IFES, Friedrich Ebert or Adenauer Foundation, Open Society Initiative of West Africa (OSIWA - Soros)
4. Mobilizing youth away from violence. The team does not propose a concrete project but offers some ideas for a future project.
5. Assistance to military families imbedded in local communities by training social workers to assist with family disputes and primary health issues. Potential partner: the Civil-Military Committee, CECIDE, and the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

Risks for Intervention

In the words of one of the team's interlocutors, "Guinea is sitting on a volcano." The volcano of violence could erupt at any time, ending any type of activity undertaken. There could be serious insecurity for any foreign personnel stationed in Guinea for BEFORE work, requiring evacuation on short notice, and a loss of money and time. There are also risks of inaction. Sustained political violence in Guinea would have destabilizing effects on all its neighbors, particularly Sierra Leone and Liberia.

1. Sources of Conflict

The team believes that any analysis of conflict prevention for Guinea should take into account five major sources of conflict:

..

1.1 Absence of the Rule of Law

Talking to political and civic leaders in Guinea, one is struck by the manner in which discussions of the rule of law are placed in the long and tortuous postcolonial history of Guinea. For the better part of its early postcolonial era, the single-party state led by Sekou Touré pointed to an arsenal of formal laws, including the constitution, as evidence of its own legitimacy and the justness of his imposed order. Indeed, Guinea had constitutional and legal prohibitions against arbitrary rulings and torture even as secret trials and dubious confessions sent thousands to untold hardship in Camp Boiro. During those years, there was no transparency in decision-making; nor were government officials accountable to the citizenry. The judiciary was not independent and the party had ultimate say over the legitimacy of government decisions or actions.

Against this background, today's opposition leaders (including those of RPG and UFR) are not impressed by government contention that it implemented a rule-of-law environment following the 1984 military coup. Instead, they point to a growing authoritarianism, the corruption of public life, and loss of public faith in the institutions of freedom, property, contract, and justice as foundation and purpose of good government. President Conté's backers are likely to point to formal texts as evidence of constitutionalism, legality, and a lawful environment. Opposition parties, judges, lawyers, and others reflexively cite the erosion of the constitutional and legal systems, democratic values and human rights. In sum, there is no overall consensus between government and "state security" officials, on the one hand, and opposition leaders, the order of advocates (*l'ordre des avocats*), judges and educated Guineans on what the rule of law means and whether it exists in Guinea. For the latter groups, formal legal systems alone do not ensure economic justice and good governance. They reject government claims to legitimacy and legality partly because the extant legal order was enacted through dubious procedures. Opposition leaders and others also point to the emergence of mafia-like clans within the inner circles of state as evidence that the state cannot exercise its legislative and regulatory authorities to actualize civil liberties and public freedoms; to instill respect for contracts, property rights, and human rights; and to bring about a more legitimate and just social compact and a political order. Accordingly, state and army officers have turned to clans that specialize in narco-trafficking and embezzlement of public funds as means to personal enrichment. In the process, the argument goes, government has imperiled public morality, civil liberties, and public safety and health.

The president bears a singular responsibility for breakdown of the rule of law. He has encouraged mob justice and embezzlement by government officials, while dispensing with formal legal procedures. Some older Guineans recall hearing the president endorse mob violence by Susu youth against Malinké merchants and bureaucrats by proclaiming "job well

done,” after the former destroyed Malinké property after Prime Minister Diarra Traore’s attempted coup in 1985. The president has justified private use of public funds by advising state functionaries that “the goat eats the grass under its feet to survive,” i.e. civil servants should not have to starve when they have access to money. Nowhere has the president trampled upon the rule of law more than in his disregard for formal judicial procedures and court decisions. This behavior is best exemplified by the president’s decision to go to prison in person to free his friend, wealthy merchant Mamadou Sylla, an act which triggered the 2007 uprising that nearly unseated him.¹

1.2 Ethnic

Most Guineans and outside observers characterize Guinean society as sharply divided ethnically among Fula (Peulh), Malinké, Susu (Soussou), and the more fragmented Forest ethnic groups. The Susu are associated with the coastal lowlands; the Fulas with the Fouta Jallon elevated midlands; the Malinké with Upper Guinea, and the numerous animist and Christian ethnic groups associated with Forest Guinea. The Forest also contains a large admixture of people linked by language and culture with the Malinké and often referred to as Konianké. Another small Malinké-linked group, the Jalonké, is associated with the Fouta Jallon and now speaks Pular, the language of the Fula. (The current prime minister Tidiane Souaré is considered Jalonké.) All groups are well represented in Conakry, particularly Susu and Fula. There are also mixtures in other major cities.

The Fulas are herders and traders, have the most wealth and are generally considered the largest group, although some argue that the Malinké, when their subgroups are included, are as numerous. Malinké President Sékou Toure’s inflammatory charge of a Peulh conspiracy in the mid 1960s led to savage repression of large numbers of the Fula elite and lingering bitterness. Susus have held a majority position in the Conté government and play a dominant role in the security and defense establishment. The Susu fear a possible return of the Malinké to power. The Malinké were targets of Lansana Conté’s wrath following an attempted coup in 1985, and the Forest communities were incited against them the same year, when hundreds died following Conté’s remarks that the Malinké were occupying

¹ The team learned that at the central prison inmates are not classified according to formal legal categories corresponding to their offenses but according to criteria determined by high-ranking government officials. These criteria define who spends the night in prison, who receives visits from relatives, and most importantly who is interrogated.

too much space in the Forest Region. Susus and Fulas have had several clashes in Conakry. There is a common view among some Guineans that since the Malinké were advantaged under Sekou Touré and the Susu have been dominant under Lansana Conté, the Fula now consider themselves first in line for political power. Others suggest that the Fula are generally satisfied with their predominant commercial position and property holdings, as well as their general political prominence. Political parties are largely ethnic in their orientation, but the division of the Fula into several fiercely competitive political parties limits their chances of forging an electoral majority.

The Malinké are more unified. Many – perhaps even most – have rallied to the party of Alpha Condé (RPG). Some believe the most serious potential political conflict is between Malinké and Susu in any transition after Lansana Conté. Elements of potential conflict emerged under the prime ministry of Lansana Kouyaté, a Malinké who spent most of his career abroad in international organizations. When Kouyaté arranged for the erection of an elephant (*sylla*), symbol of Guinea, to honor the national soccer team, some accused him of trying to rehabilitate the tradition of Sekou Touré. However, there are ambiguities in the idea of a Malinké resurgence. Many who now identify as Susu are descendants of Malinké. (Names such as Camara and Touré can be both Malinké and Susu.) The two languages are closely related.

There are cracks in Susu solidarity with the Conté regime. Some Susu are critical of its predatory and incompetent governance. The emergence of reformist Susu elite could contribute to weakening and fragmenting of the Susu-majority People's Unity Party (PUP) at the departure of Conté.

Paradoxically, these divisions are expressed against the background of a postcolonial discourse and experience of nationalism in which national unity was the ultimate goal. Ethnic grievances should be placed in the context of events that generated them. Each context illuminates the orientation of grievance and therefore the possible means to diffusing it. For instance, the grievance of the Fula as a group stems from suspicion of the state, particularly the police state –and not of any particular group. Indeed, when Touré arrested and tortured Fula elites, the party claimed to have targeted individuals who undermined national sovereignty (through foreign-backed plots) and national unity by promoting ethnic preference at all levels of the bureaucracy and national life. This is why, aside from the belief in some Fula circles that they are owed the presidency, the majority of the Fula and the parties that represent them have focused on reform of state and law. By contrast, Malinké were only indirectly victimized by the state under Conté. Rather, Conte gave justification and legitimacy to mob violence by elements of one ethnic group against another both at the time of anti-Malinké riots after the 1985 coup attempt and anti-Malinké slaughters in the Forest after 1991. Again, it is important to note that the response from the victimized groups and others pointed to a desire to return to a time when Guinea was united as a nation following national independence.

The team's soundings suggest that, although there is currently a heightened sense of ethnic consciousness in politics, a scenario of ethnic warfare is unlikely. Guineans sometimes say

that ethnicity is a cloak which is “put on” or “taken off” depending on the social or political situation. Although ethnic stereotypes are a fundamental fact of life in Guinea, significant episodes of ethnic killings are uncommon. Under a situation of serious instability, however, clashes leading to ethnic cleansing in certain areas could not be ruled out.

1.3 Security and Defense Forces

For the past 25 years the Guinean Security and Defense Forces have played a pivotal role in the country. Given their positioning at the center of the management of national affairs, they have become an indispensable player. Over the course of time, they have become the best organized entity in a country faced with multiple problems. The Guinean army and the *gendarmerie* (which originally emerged from French colonial troops) have proved themselves on several battlefields and provided numerous efforts in the independence struggles of fellow African countries, such as Angola, Guinea-Bissau and Cape Verde. Later, the Guinean forces participated in other international operations on behalf of the United Nations or other sub-regional organizations. Despite the numerous difficulties it has faced, the Guinean Armed Forces include many seasoned professionals.

Indiscipline overtook the troops in 1996, causing the most violent riots in the history of the 2nd Republic. This breach was a consequence of breakdown of civil-military relations. In the lead up to the crisis, the command authority and the subordinate divisions for executing orders failed to fulfill their respective roles. Thus, February 1996 became an infamous date in the recent history of the Armed Forces. The violence resulted in an upward review of soldiers' salaries and a payment plan for backlogged benefits. Nonetheless, it was only following the events of 2007 that these agreements began to be implemented.

Several other notable events have taken place since the events of 1996, including the Army's involvement in the ECOWAS monitoring force ECOMOG in Liberia (beginning in 1990), Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau and the successful expulsion of Liberian and Sierra Leonean rebel forces after their invasion of Guinea in 2000. These foreign operations, carried out with considerable professionalism, contrast starkly with the violent outbursts of the military in 2006 and 2007. These last events seriously degraded the relationship between the civilian population and the security and defense forces, which, given the amplitude of the damage, had to apologize to the people of Guinea for their actions.

Today, the security and defense forces, which constitute approximately 30,000 men and women in uniform, are plagued with internal control problems. The terms of recruitment of the forces are not respected. The rules for maintenance of order are disregarded, especially the expected order of intervention of the armed forces, i.e. the first level of intervention, the police force, should be followed by the *gendarmerie*, as needed, and ultimately backstopped by the army, should the situation require their involvement. There are no procedural orders and no reprimands for undisciplined or extra-legal activity. Often all three security units are present at a single checkpoint or security situation, with no coordination. The failure to respect the order of intervention causes confusion on the ground and results in mistakes and

mismanagement, with serious consequences for the country. The only well-equipped force is the Autonomous Battalion of the Presidential Guard (Red Bérêts) who are assisted, as needed, by the “Rangers” Battalion, an elite rapid response unit based in Kankan that was trained by the US Army. The security and defense forces face both external and internal threats. External challenges encountering the army include:

1.3.1 Drug Trafficking

The Sahel region, which extends from the Atlantic coast across the continent to Darfur, has become an extensive transit hub for the traffic of hard drugs imported from Latin America. The Guinean Armed Forces have difficulty organizing an effective and orthodox fight against this problem at a national-level, in the absence of the proposed West African regional strategy. There is both a lack of resources and the non-application of the coordinated rules of intervention between the different forces (police, *gendarmerie*, and army). Seized drugs are a valuable commodity which all of the forces desire to control. This is, of course, a broader African problem, not limited to Guinea.

1.3.2 Former Rebels at Borders

The armed conflicts which have taken place in Sierra Leone, Liberia and, more recently, in Côte d’Ivoire (where the border demilitarized zone no longer exists) have created pockets populated by thousands of ex-rebels who are not fully controlled by any of the governments concerned. These young people are on the watch for any area of turbulence, where they could congregate to “offer their services”. In the event of serious internal troubles, the Guinean armed forces would barely be able to contain and control these groups.

1.3.3 Management of Volunteers

Over 6000 armed volunteers participated in the repression of the rebels in 2000 and spent approximately 12 months alongside the National Army. Abruptly demobilized, they consider themselves abandoned and excluded, with the exception of a limited number who participated in a UNDP demobilization program in the Forest Region and a few more that were recruited. Today, these volunteers constitute a real danger; many of them are still armed and are involved in armed robberies and road blocks.

Internal challenges for the army, in turn, include:

1.3.4 Ethnic Divisions

The Guinean Armed Forces deal with the same ethnic divisions and tensions as the rest of the society. The recruitment system is not multi-ethnic or national, and barely takes into account regional divisions and representation during the incorporation phase. Uniformity and consistency in the make-up of the troops is shattered by the recruitment process.

1.3.5 Inequality of Treatment

There is a stark inequality between the pay and perquisites of officers, who enjoy extravagant life styles, and that of the rank-and-file who struggle to survive.

1.3.6 Infrequent and Irregular Payment of Salaries

The infrequency of salary payments and the total failure to pay some benefits have pushed troops toward the trade union movement, since they share the same goals. Although army salaries have been paid since the events of 2007-2008, the situation remains fragile given the state of the national treasury.

1.3.7 Retirement

Retirement procedures do not appear to follow a prescribed rule applicable to all. Arbitrary retirement is at the root of a serious generational crisis, and the fracture refuses to heal.

The above analysis indicates the close link of the Guinean Army to the troubles of the country and demonstrates how it ultimately plays a critical role in any consensus arrangements or arbitrated decisions taken to resolve crises. Intimately linked to the political sphere, the armed forces can easily become a source of conflict, particularly if internal dissent and divisions in the ranks take on political dimensions. Therefore the strategy adopted to assist the security and defense forces to effectively protect and contribute to the development of the nation is a major issue for conflict prevention.

1.4 Economic hardship and inequity

Although high commodity prices for bauxite and iron ore should be expanding state revenues, Lansana Conté's government coffers are empty and there is no trickle down to the people. Guineans have been buffeted by high rates of inflation and rising prices for rice, the basic foodstuff, and fuel. The urban poor are facing increasing hardship in making ends meet. Jobs are not available for young people emerging from schools or universities. Most Guineans who are not farmers or herders make their living as part of the extended informal economy. Conditions are said to be particularly bad in some remote prefectures in Upper Guinea and the Fouta Jallon.

Despite the hardship, Guinea's economy is not prostrate. We viewed busy markets in Conakry, Mamou, Kissidougou and Kankan. Our travel along the main trunk highway to Upper Guinea and Forest Guinea revealed an exceptionally heavy rainy season, generally good harvests and a population which seemed neither malnourished nor ill-clothed. There is massive traffic congestion in Conakry, and large numbers of taxi vehicles and trucks ply Guinea's badly maintained paved roads. Guineans appear to benefit from a dynamic informal economy which includes trade with neighboring countries. (A number of our interlocutors also cited evidence of localized extravagant expenditures from drug money, particularly in the Lower Coast area around Boké and construction in Conakry.)

Perhaps more important than economic hardship as a potential trigger for violence is a widespread sense that the political class skims off the wealth of the country, leaving little or nothing for the rest. Economic inequity buttresses political inequity as a motive for occasional spasms of violence against state symbols. Further increases in food prices, particularly the price of rice, could trigger new popular risings against the government.

1.5 External tensions

Bordering Guinea Bissau, Senegal, Mali, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast, Guinea is at the center of a volatile region. Over the past 50 years all of the Guinea's neighbors, except Senegal, have experienced military coup d'états. Sierra Leone, Liberia, Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea Bissau have suffered violent civil wars, while Mali and Senegal have faced serious challenges to central state authority respectively in the Tuareg and Casamance separatist movements. Moreover, a number of ethnic groups straddle international borders and continue to try to move freely between countries. That has led to conflict between inhabitants of the border communities and the various national security forces especially when government agents have taken advantage of the borders to extort money and otherwise oppress civilians. Long-standing traditional disputes over land have in the past heightened border tension between Guinea and Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and Mali. The flight of millions of people into Guinea from civil war in Sierra Leone, Liberia and Ivory Coast has made Guinea's Forest region particularly contentious over the past 15 years. The refugees have had an adverse impact on the environment because of the vast increase of demands for water, farm land and social infrastructure. Guinea was unable to cope with the influx, and the costs of refugee support were only partially met by the international community. The Kissi ethnic group, which straddles the border with Liberia and Sierra Leone, has been particularly affected. Kissi refugees were initially taken in by their Guinean kin at considerable sacrifice. Now representatives of Kissis living in the Guinea forest have demanded compensation for the damage they suffered due to the spill-over of war from Liberia and Sierra Leone.

1.5.1 Sierra Leone

The hostility between Guinean soldiers and Sierra Leonean and Liberian refugees in the border region has exacerbated long standing differences of opinion over the location of the international boundary dispute. Former refugees returning to Sierra Leone complain they have been denied access by Guinean military personnel to a number of villages in the Yenga section of Kissi Teng chiefdom in Sierra Leone. The Guineans assert that the area is legally part of Guinea as it is within 800 meters of the bank of the Makona River, a claim disputed by the returnees and the Sierra Leone government. The Yenga question has been the subject of two meetings between Sierra Leone and Guinea at head of state level, two further summits of the MRU and several meetings by technical experts of both countries and from the former colonial governments of France and United Kingdom. Although at the official national level the two governments have agreed to a formula to resolve formal sovereignty, tension remains high on the ground, punctuated by periodic incidents involving Guinean soldiers and

Sierra Leonean civilians. Sierra Leone police and military in Kailahun charge that their Guinean counterparts seem unwilling to participate in confidence building initiatives at the local level.

1.5.2 Mali: Mandiana-Yanofila

In 2006 and 2007 there were clashes over land rights between villagers in Guinea's Mandiana prefecture, part of Upper Guinea, and Mali's Yanofila prefecture. In one incident in November 2007, Guinean villagers – armed with hunting rifles and machetes – reportedly killed six Malians, injured 20, while burning homes and stealing cattle. Meetings at the prime minister and ministerial level between the two countries led to pledges to hold regular meetings of border authorities from the national to the local level, as well as promises to involve traditional communicators and women in resolving the matter. Tensions have cooled in 2008, but could revive.

1.5.3 Côte d'Ivoire

In 2003 the parties to the Ivorian civil war and the international community agreed to demilitarization of the buffer zone between the northern rebels and southern loyalists. Guinea and Ghana blocked their boundaries with Cote d' Ivoire to reduce rebel trans-border activities. The demilitarized zone was dismantled in March 2008. There is some danger that unemployed and unreintegrated Ivorian rebels could spill over the border, creating a security problem for Guinea.

2. Dangers of Violence 2008-2009

The coming six months present an important opportunity for destabilizing political violence. The electoral calendar calls for legislative elections, already delayed by a year, in 2008, communal elections in 2009 and presidential elections in 2010. Further delays in the legislative elections, unless the population perceives that credible progress is being made in meeting the technical steps required for implementation, could trigger violence in the next few months. Most Guineans we spoke to in civil society and the political parties suggested that delays beyond February would inflame popular indignation. There appears to be a difference between Conakry and the rest of the country in expectations about the election. In the interior, the population seems more determined to move forward. An improved electoral process would lessen the peril of conflict, while an obstructed process would increase the danger.

The death of Lansana Conté is another possible trigger for violence. Guineans we spoke to with some access to those around the president suggest that he is in another period of declining health. His occasional moments of lucidity are bracketed by periodic diabetic comas. He does not appear to be meeting with Guinean officials. His death would likely trigger a political crisis with unpredictable results. Constitutionally, the death of the president shifts power to Mohammed Aboubacar Somparé, president of the National Assembly, who has long been associated with Conté but has had periods of disfavor. Somparé would be charged with organizing presidential elections within 60 days. Somparé, who returned from medical treatment in Europe about the time of the team's arrival, met with the group. He has aged considerably, since the team leader last saw him in the mid-1990s and lacks vigor, although his commentary did not reflect in any evident way a diminution of mental capacity. Since the 2002 legislative elections were flawed and boycotted by most opposition parties and the term of the current National Assembly has expired, the opposition political parties do not consider Somparé to have the legitimacy to be the successor to Conté, even for a temporary period. Several of our interlocutors predicted that the army, aware of Somparé's feebleness and lack of legitimacy, would carry out a military coup rather than allow the transfer. The possibility cannot be excluded, however, that if Somparé were to move vigorously toward a legitimate electoral process that the short-term constitutional transition process might be allowed to proceed in peace. Given Somparé's long time interest in the presidency, that peaceful scenario seems unlikely, however.

3. A Preliminary Strategy for Conflict Prevention in Guinea

Guinea is hardly lacking in conflict prevention and peace-building initiatives. A number of donors are working in this area, including the United States, France, and the UNDP, as well as African regional organizations like ECOWAS and the Mano River Union. In addition, a group of international NGOs have undertaken projects with Guinean partners. Everywhere we went we posed the question of whether there was space for BEFORE to work. Every answer we heard was affirmative. The key issues therefore are how the Mechanism could contribute to the process and the particular niches best suited to its nature.

Our conclusion is that, if BEFORE chooses to involve itself in Guinea, it should collaborate with those elements which are already engaged in efforts to promote a transition in Guinea to a government chosen democratically and characterized by rule of law. Potential partners include, above all, civil society but also some of the political parties and certain elements of an otherwise incoherent state apparatus.

3.1 Mobilize Quickly to Support Legislative Elections

The initial element in such a strategic approach would be to provide effective support for a timely and legitimate legislative electoral process. Given the clear reluctance of the presidency and National Assembly to proceed, much depends on whether civil society can mount an effective advocacy campaign to pressure the government forward. That would appear to require a capacity to mount a far-flung publicity campaign using the media and relying on leaders of opinion. Rapid and well organized international support for such an effort over the next few months could be critical to its success.

To mark the fiftieth anniversary of Guinea's independence, ECOWAS is considering sponsoring a high-level event like a regional summit aimed at demonstrating its will to support Guinea on its trajectory toward democracy and sound governance. The team was informed that some donors are interested in partnering in a collaborative effort to that end, including IFES, French cooperation, the European Union, DANIDA, and the Club du Sahel (OCDE). BEFORE could mark its entry as a regional actor by participating in such an effort.

A longer-term approach would involve support for facilitating the achievement of the transition. We view such an approach as focusing particularly on

(a) Strengthening particular civil society groups which are currently playing a key role in the transition. The groups we found to have the most potential in this regard are women, youth, the unions and the inter-ethnic Committee of Elders (Comité de Sages). Women and youth in particular could play an important role in helping to assure a peaceful electoral process. A conflict prevention initiative with the political parties should also be considered.

(b) A second critical area of international support is helping realign the security forces so that they provide security and law and order for the nation rather than preying on the citizenry and engaging in arbitrary abuse of human rights. Obviously, with its limited resources and lack of a track record in Guinea, the BEFORE would need to focus its efforts on filling niches where programs do not exist at present or alternatively on providing complementary resources for

programs underway. However, follow-on support to existing initiatives such as the training and sensitizing of the armed forces in rights and responsibilities would be extremely useful.

3.2 Strengthening Civil Society Groups

3.2.1 Affirming and Reinforcing the Role of Women

Women have traditionally played an important role in Guinean crises. The importance of women in the independence struggle is well documented. Conventional wisdom has been that after Sekou Touré lost the support of the working women of Conakry, his regime went into decline. The core of Lansana Conte's political constituency has been Guinean market women and traders. In the union-led demonstrations of January-February, 2007, Hajja Rabiadou Serah Diallo, Secretary-General of the National Confederation of Guinean Workers (CNTG) assumed a major leadership role. Members of the team met with her and with Mme. Rouguy Barry Keba, a former mayor of the Conakry commune of Matam, who is mobilizing women for a political role. Women are extremely prominent in civil society groups at the national and local level.

Nevertheless, women do not have a prominent formal position in Guinea's political life. Community level women are very visible and vocal but rarely hold formal positions of power. There have often been women ministers, but they rarely exercise much political influence. One of our interlocutors suggested that educated women shun involvement in the rough and tumble of competitive politics but are happy to accept presidential appointments to high office. In the past, women have placed their considerable resources at the service of male politicians and male agendas.

Virtually all the women the team spoke to were highly critical of the current political and economic situation. In particular, they expressed concern about individual safety and security, absence of the rule of law, the impunity of the security forces and the growing menace of crime. The perceived unwillingness of the Conte government to hold free and fair elections was described as another example of the pervasive absence of accountability.

Female interviewees decried dissension among women and attributed women's lack of progress to lack of sisterly solidarity. Such views are also common in Liberia, but in both countries initiatives have been undertaken which helped women to coalesce to work for common goals established by them. Guinean women are ready to do more. The team believes that the stability of Guinea during the transition now under way would be enhanced if Guinean women were supported in their efforts to build on their conflict resolution interventions during the events of January and February 2007. Women working in a non-partisan manner for a non-violent transition would provide a way for women to work constructively, unhindered by ethnic and other considerations and in a manner that would not be threatening to male politicians. Based on the experience in Sierra Leone and Liberia, we can expect women to play a role in conflict prevention in Guinea in the short and longer term.

3.2.2 Mobilizing Youth for Non-Violence

More than 60% of Guinea's population is under 30. In a deteriorating economy with rampant unemployment, Guinea's youth have little hope for the future. Daily confrontation with corruption and disrespect for the rule of law is leading today's youth to become increasingly disengaged and disinterested in the political and social development process. The strong mobilization of youth during Guinea's recent events and their willingness to sacrifice themselves demonstrate that they have a vested interest in change. However, as Guinea's crisis of governance becomes more acute, the risk increases that youth will turn to destructive forms of political expression. Channeling the energies of Guinea's youth toward positive modes of political expression, where shared frustrations can serve as a catalyst for reform rather than conflict is therefore important to maintaining Guinea's waning social and political stability. There are nascent networks of youth organizations nationwide that could

serve as a platform for awakening youth and developing solidarity for action. Youth groups have a capacity to mobilize their members and resources when inspired, but few are aware of the important role they could play in promoting social, political and economic reform. Most organizations have not been given the necessary tools to play a positive role in the development of their communities and in the promotion of reform and good governance.

It would be helpful to the transition process to mobilize youth in a generalized program of non-violence. The advantage presented by young people is that they are not vested in the pervasive struggle among older generations over the violence of the first government. Apart from the Children of the Victims of Camp Boiro, a formal organization of somewhat aging relatives of those who suffered Toure's repression, there are three categories of youth to which BEFORE should pay particular attention. There is a category of politically independent youth that is moved principally by concerns arising from the current socio-economic and political crises. This group seeks to free itself from the squabbles, political rivalries, and ethnic divisions that have marked Guinean politics since independence. The sentiment driving these youths was manifest in the creation of the *Nouvelles forces démocratiques*, or New Democratic Forces. This party aims to enlist Guineans under 40 in a platform of political renewal. Indeed, politically ambitious youths have recently risen to prominence. The team's attention was drawn to rapper Demba Dia (alias Rock Mbalax) who recently established a *Mouvement pour l'action et la citoyenneté* (Movement for Action and Citizenship) to support his bid for mayor in one district of the capital. Although these political parties and movements lack the political heft of older parties, BEFORE would be well advised to include them in any political agenda of reform targeting political parties.

The second category resembles the first in outlook but is less interested in party politics. It consists mostly of graduates from Guinean universities and is more complex. A large number lack the resources to venture into the private sector and therefore expect the government to provide them with jobs. One sub-group has been able to integrate the burgeoning NGO and transnational sectors. Other civic minded individuals have formed study groups (*cercles d'études*) as fora for reflection on the present and future. These groups often struggle to support themselves and maintain their independence. This second category of youth can be productively enlisted in a non-violent transition. There is a lot that BEFORE can do in the short and medium term for this group. For instance, in partnership with other transnational NGOs already on the scene, it can sponsor programs aimed at youth. These groups would benefit from direct financial support because they are open to progressive liberal ideas and are therefore possible conduits for democratic norms and the rule of law.

The third category of youth comprises the relatively educated jobless, including recent university graduates, who wander the streets without relief from the stresses of everyday life. They are drawn to radical political agendas. In their daily struggles, they are joined by those who did not complete school and live on the margins of city life. During protests and political rallies, they are most likely to resort to violence against state agents, to destroy property, and to defy the exhortations of all organized political forces. This last category poses the greatest challenge for domestic peace and stability. It can only be reached through the combined efforts of governments, NGOs, and transnational organizations willing to undertake civic education, infrastructure development, and training to meet local labor demands.

Since youth, particularly males, are the shock troops of the political parties, the performance of political parties is more important to public peace in Guinea than the laws on the books or election monitoring systems. Opposition parties concur on the lack of legitimacy of the National Assembly and the need for elections prior to Conte's departure from the political scene. However, past events and the political culture of the country suggest that political parties are not cognizant of their responsibilities under the rule of law. For instance, it appeared in our interviews that political parties frequently called on their members to come out in protest of government actions without asking for permits and providing marshals to monitor events. All but one political party lack crisis committees to deal with situation of chaos on the streets. Finally, while political parties hold congresses to elect leaders and discuss their overall programs, none has ever had a convention to draw up a specific party platform consistent with the circumstances of the moment. One of the consequences is an increasing gap between grassroots militants – who are often more advanced in ideology and

policy – and their national leaders. Campaign platitudes reinforce ethnic solidarity rather than political allegiance to a program or set of principles. BEFORE should therefore examine how it might contribute to non-violent behavior by political parties.

3.3 Realigning the Security Forces with the Nation

Repairing the rupture of confidence between the security and defense forces and the civilian population will require a comprehensive program. Such a program can probably best be carried out by a new government with a strong commitment to meliorate the civilian-military relations, buttressed by broad donor assistance. Reforms will be required in establishing and implementing new standards for recruitment to ensure that the army and police reflect the ethnic composition of the nation, as well as new standards for promotion, length of service and retirement. Rehabilitation of barracks, military encampments and other military infrastructure is important to instill pride in the military and to end the residence of military forces with their weapons in civilian neighborhoods, an invitation to criminal behavior. (See Appendix: A Broad Program of Proposed Reforms for Guinea's Security and Defense Forces.) The team believes there is scope for NGO assistance in setting up channels of communication between army and nation through the media, community films, and fairs and open houses for civilians at military facilities. NGOs may also be able to provide certain kinds of support for army corps of engineer road and bridge building projects, perceived by the population as contributing to economic development. The team is particularly attracted to the idea of BEFORE financing to train social workers who would work with military families and their civilian neighbors to promote home economics skills and to mediate domestic conflicts.

4 Factors and Institutions Containing Violence

Certain sentiments prevalent in the political elite and the population as a whole constitute a broad public opinion militating against resort to violence. Guinea's *non* in General de Gaulle's 1958 referendum in favor of inclusion in a French Community is a point of pride for all Guineans, even though that gesture led to a Stalinist dictatorship and the impoverishment of a country of great economic potential. Guinea's pioneering option for independence among France's African colonies rallied virtually all Guineans to the banner of nationalism. That sentiment remains in spite of the disillusionment of the past fifty years. Secondly, Guineans take some pride in the fact that their country has not fallen into the civil war experienced by Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Côte d'Ivoire, in spite of predictions that the conflagration would spread to them. Third, Guineans with their heightened consciousness of ethnic differences, perhaps the most acute in the sub-region, are paradoxically on guard against the danger of generalized ethnic warfare. We hope they are capable of cooling ethnic animosities in crisis situations.

There are institutions, both formal and civic which can play a positive role in containing violence. We were particularly impressed by a group from the Committee of Elders, about 50 men who gathered to meet us in a modest and sweltering room in a Conakry suburb. The Committee is inter-ethnic, with co-chairmen from the four regions of Guinea. (It did not escape our notice, however, that the Forest Region was represented by a Malinké Muslim, not a Christian.) After formal introductions and remarks, the floor was given to a spokesperson who uttered perhaps the most precise and succinct analysis of the political situation we heard during our stay. He described the mobilization of the group, by then 20 years old, during the events of January-February 2007. It approached both the president and members of the national assembly to say that "you are both our children. You must listen to the people. And you must sign the pact proposed by the unions for a reform government under a prime minister." The Committee took credit for the president's reluctant signature of the accords, but noted frankly that the accords had not been applied, leading to the current crisis. The spokesperson stated that those around Conté are not "permitting" him to honor the accords, but only with "good governance" could the problems of the country be resolved without violence. He ended by saying that a change of government (*alternance*) was essential and that the elections must go forward in a timely and correct manner.

The Elders are in a national manner reflective of a number of traditional inter-ethnic mechanisms for conflict resolution in the rural areas, such as mutual forgiveness societies in the Forest, and a variety of community-based platforms for dialogue which have been moderating and solving local disputes for decades.

We talked with numerous civil society groups pressing for credible, timely elections and/or other conflict prevention measures: the National Council of Civil Society Organizations, the Guinean branch of the West African Network for Peace (WANEP), which coordinated our meetings in Guinea, the Mano River Women's Peace Network (REFMAP in Guinea, MAWOPNET in the Anglophone states), Friends of the Future, a student organization working for improvements in education, health and the environment, the Christian

Organization for Human Promotion (OCHP), and the Guinean Organization for Human Rights (OGDH).

There are also several mixed government and civil society organizations set up in the wake of the 2007 demonstrations, which continue to operate – or at least to exist: the important Civil Military Committee (CCM), formally headed by an ex-military National Assembly deputy from the Forest. That committee, which includes well-regarded military and civilian personalities, produced in July 2008 a document entitled Proposals for Emerging from the Crisis, which focused on reform of the security forces. The document proposed a revision of the statute governing the army, regularizing promotion, training, and retirement, and decentralization of barracks. With its implementing partner CECIDE, CCM has organized training courses and seminars on the Guinean constitution and citizen rights and responsibilities. It has regional components in all seven administrative regions. The National Committee on the Fight Against Proliferation and Circulation of Illegal Small Arms is led by BG Ibrahima Diallo, a veteran of ECOMOG and UNAMSIL, but has 32 non-military members. Diallo claims that his Committee, which has received funding from ECOWAS and UNDP, is civil society. It claims to be organized at the regional level, where it works with local authorities and international NGOs. A Commission of Investigation into the Events of January/February 2007 has received no support by either Prime Minister Kouyaté or Prime Minister Souaré and apparently has no budget. We did not meet with the commission, whose representative twice postponed meetings. In the absence of action by the Commission, a civil society alliance, the Coalition for the Defense of Victims of the Events, produced its own report in November 2007. It provides a straight-forward chronology of events and analysis of laws and human rights norms violated.

The team was favorably impressed by the leaders of two state bodies. Mohamed Oury Bah, Minister of National Reconciliation, said that the creation of his ministry – and its direction by a member of the opposition – constitutes a pioneering step by the government. He described the developments of 2006-2007 as a “true revolution” now being undertaken by a “government of broad openness.” Countervailing forces are now operating within the government to create a separation of powers. He described the revolution as “profoundly democratic,” but admitted that the new institutions were still fragile, requiring a step-by-step approach. The political class does not yet understand the positive direction taken. We viewed the Minister, who is regarded as sincere, as engaging in wishful thinking, but concluded that the existence of the new ministry, which has a temporary small office, is a step in the right direction. The Ministry was involved in a ceremony during our visit in which the remains of three Forestiers killed by the army in Conakry in 2000 were returned to their families with an expression of regret. (Another bit of evidence for “countervailing forces” came from an interlocutor just named to a new position, Director of Human Rights in the Ministry of Justice. He says he has a mandate to create a system for citizen human rights petitions to the government.)

Ben Sekou Sylla, chairman of the Independent National Election Committee (CENI) (as well as chairman of the National Council of Guinean Civil Society Organizations) told us that he

wanted fair elections; whether they could be achieved was another question. His body is struggling against the habits of the past 50 years, cynicism about recent elections, “ethnic political strategies,” and most important a lack of funds. He complained that the prime minister during a recent *tête-à-tête* “was not facing the problem.” Ben Sylla, who has doubts whether there is sufficient political will to hold the election, said he was telling other members of the government that they need to allow popular self-expression; otherwise Guinea will “explode.” He is proposing a tour of the country to publicize the work of the CENI and show that the CENI is independent of the local authorities. He is having trouble getting long term support from the political parties, which are mainly interested in any money the CENI may come up with for their militants involved in voter registration. Ben Sylla’s remarks stimulated the team to a discussion of a potential rapid BEFORE intervention discussed below.

5 Potential Entry Points for Action

The team concluded that there are three major entry points for intervention in favor of conflict prevention. The first is in support of fair elections. As indicated above, the timing of such intervention is necessarily early, since postponement of the elections beyond the first quarter of 2009 could lead to an eruption of violence. The unfolding of a fair electoral process is the clearest mode of conflict prevention in Guinea. As the most important civil society network and a major change agent, the Guinean National Council of Civil Society Organizations (CNOSCG) could mobilize the social movement, including union, youth and women, to advocate for elections and pressure on the government to take them seriously.

A second entry point would be the campaigns now under way by key elements of civil society to bring about a successful transition to democratic government and rule of law. The most important of these, in addition to the CNOSCG, are sub-regional peace groups supported by ECOWAS or the Mano River Union, women and youth networks, and the Committee of Elders. These organizations, with the exception of the Elders, have a variety of donor and NGO partners. Nonetheless, they can use carefully targeted assistance for types of promising activities.

A third potential entry point would be the death of Lansana Conté. That event could occur at almost any moment. However, Conté's health has been bad for 15 years and his demise has been regularly predicted since 2003. Since the turn of events following his death is impossible to predict, some might argue that it would be prudent to wait until his departure to make a judgment about the political landscape and to analyze then which forces for both violence and conflict resolution are unleashed. Under that scenario a post-Conté move toward constitutional revision might provide a reasonable entry point. The team does not counsel that work in Guinea be suspended until Conté's death. We believe that it would be difficult for BEFORE to launch its work at that time in the absence of established relationships on the ground with civil society, positive elements of the state, and the security forces.

6 Risks of Action

The team does not believe that BEFORE would encounter hostility in seeking to enter Guinea. Over the past two decades Guineans and the Guinean Government have become accustomed to the work of foreign donors, including extensive cooperation with Guinean NGO's. All our interlocutors emphasized that the team was welcome. Our hosts were favorably impressed by the multinational nature of our approach and particularly by the inclusion of distinguished team members from West Africa.

The risk of action centers on the possibility that BEFORE entry into Guinea might be nullified and implementation of very focused projects could be swept aside by political upheaval in the country either at the death of Conté or by a popular rising which would overthrow his government by violence. If the country were consumed with violence, the BEFORE investment of funds and effort in project preparation could be wasted, requiring a fresh beginning. Given the size of the country, however, and the likelihood that international NGOs would find themselves dealing with at least some Guineans with whom they had been working, preparatory work is unlikely to be completely wasted. Moreover, funding would be release in installments and could be halted, if circumstances warrant.

A less momentous risk is that efforts to move Guinea along a positive political path of freedom of conflict have been regularly frustrated in the past by arbitrary government actions, frequent changes of prime ministers and ministers, and general bad government. Guinea is littered with the wreckage of bad donor projects. There is no guarantee of success in this country for donor or international NGO projects. However, projects aimed at consciousness rising, capacity building, and empowerment are unlikely to be completely nullified.

Finally, the risk of inaction should be cited. If BEFORE is truly interested in conflict prevention and resolution in West Africa, Guinea is at or near the top of the list for conflagration. Moreover, the close relations between Guineans and their neighbors – particularly in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau – mean that the ramifications of internal conflict go well beyond the borders of one country. At the present moment, Guinea represents in our view the most suitable present target for BEFORE attention.

7 Recommendations on Partnership

In a society characterized by serious social, economic and political divisions, conflict prevention measures must be inclusive and federative. Guineans have demonstrated a capacity to present a united front in the 1958 fight for independence, for preservation of state sovereignty in 2000 and for improving living conditions in 2007. However, the hopes of the 2007 uprising have yet to be satisfied, and there is growing frustration. There have been a series of campaigns and dialogue processes targeting Guinean opinion leaders to increase understanding of democratic principles and the rule of law. Civic education on the electoral process has aimed at restoring trust in the electoral process. For the first time in Guinea's electoral history, most of the elements required for a fair and transparent election are in place: an independent electoral commission, a potentially improved voter registry, and a population mobilized to demand that its electoral will be respected. A successful election would rekindle Guinean hopes that the sacrifices of 2007 have not been in vain. However, the absence of political will among national decision-makers to hold the elections is worrisome, and recent cabinet nominations have raised suspicion about the neutrality of state officials.

The team believes urgent short-term support should be given civil society that it may advocate on behalf of the Guinean people for timely, fair and peaceful elections. Then support should be considered for major Guinean stakeholders – women, youth, and the security forces – as they lead Guinea through a sensitive transition. Finally, the events of the past two years have highlighted the weakness of the political class and their political parties. The team believes that support is warranted to reinforce consensus building and strategizing within the parties.

7.1 Guinean Social Forum on the Electoral Process

The team recommends rapid BEFORE intervention to promote publicity and pressure on the government to hold free and fair legislative elections by sponsorship of a social forum. Guinean civil society has been increasingly active and has organized several social fora in partnership with IFES: the First Guinean Social Forum in March 2004, the 1st West African Social Forum in November 2004 on the theme Social Movements, Conflicts and Integration in West Africa; Regional Social Fora in Kankan and Kindia in June 2005. These events were to prepare Guinean civil society for the 4th Africa Social Forum in December 2005 on the theme "Africa: the Cradle of Humanity and the World's Future."

Theme:

The Role of Civil Society in the Electoral and Democratization Process

Objectives:

- Demonstrate the engagement and determination of the Guinean population on behalf of peaceful and fair elections
- Affirm the role of civil society in the electoral and democratization process.
- Lay the groundwork for a reflection on a common vision for the future of Guinea.

Partnerships:

IFES and the CNOSCG (which includes professional organizations, trade unions, media, youth and women networks, the Council of Elders and the private sector; it also has regional and prefectural branches). Other interested international donors (e.g. UNDP, USAID, Embassies) could increase the number of participants.

Target:

The Guinean government, the CENI, the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Political Affairs, the political parties, the population at large.

Projected Outcomes:

- Over 1000 representatives of civil society participate in a national effort to promote the holding of free and fair elections.
- A strong message is sent to the government, the presidency and other stakeholders that the Guinean social movement remains strong and engaged, and wants free and fair legislative elections early 2009 at the latest.
- Solidarity amongst civil society components is reinforced and the basis is launched for discussion in greater depth on the future of Guinea. Civil society has an increased vision of its role in determining the future of its country.

Content:

Plenary sessions, key note presentations and panels on the meaning and importance of elections and the role of the Guinean National Assembly as a means for democratic control; sessions in working groups; production of a work plan and code of conduct; and an official Forum Declaration.

Methodology:

IFES will allocate a sub-grant to the CNOSCG (at the national level), as well as sub-grants to its 8 regional councils, for the mobilization of Guineans from all regions and the organization of the Forum. CNOSCG is an alliance of over 60 national networks and will organize an all-inclusive event.

Timing:

Early December 2008

Approximate cost:

\$70,000

7.2 Women's Caravan to Promote Fair Elections

The team recommends BEFORE financial support for mobilizing women in a caravan of women's associations, drawing in different ethnic groups, traveling from the Forest Region to Conakry. The Guinean Women's Caravan would be staged in two phases: the first, before

the Legislative elections, now expected in February 2009, and the second phase ahead of the Local Government Elections to be held later in 2009.

Theme:

Guinean women, in concert with their sisters in the sub-region, demand free and fair elections as a means of avoiding political violence in Guinea. They intend to be active participants in the electoral process.

Objectives:

- To carry the message throughout the country, starting from the interior, that Guinean women from all walks of life and regions insist on free and fair elections.
- To mobilize as many different women as possible, especially those who might not normally feel that elections and women's activism are appropriate for them.
- To bridge the divides among women based on ethnicity, religion, economic status or educational attainment.
- To strengthen ties with women in the other three Mano River Union (MRU) countries by emphasizing the common sub-regional interest in ending violence and conflict.

Partnerships:

- Guinean organizations: AGUIFPEG (Guinean Association for the Involvement of Women in the Electoral Process and Governance), Club de Femmes, National Council of Women
- Subregional organizations: West African Network for Peace (WANEP), including its Women in Peace-Building Program (WIPNET); Mano River Women's Network for Peace (REFMAP).
- National Democratic Institute (NDI), Search for Common Ground, which already has a program in Guinea. (Its counterparts in Sierra Leone and Liberia have taken a lead in such activities.)

Target:

Women of all ethnic groups and walks of life, particularly those residing outside of Conakry

Projected Outcomes:

- A day of women's parades, musical and dramatic performances, speeches and training workshops in each of the 34 prefectural centers of Guinea over the two phases of the project.
- Formation of an action committee in each prefecture.
- Declarations on the elections from each prefecture for conveyance to Conakry.
- A series of radio broadcasts publicizing the progress of the Caravan.
- Delivery of the declarations to key power centers in Conakry with attendant publicity.

Content:

- A small group of Sierra Leonean and Liberian women from the border areas would cross the frontier to the Forest prefectural headquarters of Gueckedou (or perhaps in

Nongoa, a sub-prefectural headquarters closer to the frontier) to hold a day of consciousness-raising and planning with Guinean women.

- At the end of a day of public processions, musical and dramatic performances, training workshops and radio programs, the women of the host prefecture would be invited to form an action committee for promoting free and fair legislative elections and perhaps to act as independent election observers. The women would draw up a declaration of their demands for the elections to be entrusted to the Caravan for eventual delivery to Conakry. Six women would be identified to join the Caravan and take the message to the next stop. The women from the neighboring countries would then return home.
- At the next stop, in a different prefecture, the process would be repeated. The women from the last stop would lead the consciousness-raising activities before returning home, and six new women would carry the message forward.
- During each phase the Caravan team would make 17 stops in various prefectures on the way through the five regions.
- The Caravan would culminate in Conakry. After stops in one or more of the city's communes, women from different regions and social strata would deliver the declarations collected along the way to the President, Prime Minister, the CENI, the political parties, the heads of the police and military, and representatives of the international community.
- The emphasis in the first phase will be on women championing free, fair and violence-free elections, while in the second round, women's active participation in politics and promotion of an agreed women's agenda would be the focus.

Methodology:

- The changing cast of six women from the neighboring countries or prefectures would be accompanied by a permanent team consisting of a *project coordinator*, two trained and experienced gender and community level *facilitators*, a small *media team* and an independent *adviser*.
- The media team would link up with community radio stations at the various stops to assure full coverage of the Caravan and to promote continued local discussion of the issues raised. The media team would also seek to engage the national broadcasting authorities. The media team would document and provide full reports of the various activities undertaken using various media.
- An *advisory committee* of Guinean women with technical expertise, contacts and experience in women's activities would counsel the coordinator. The committee would identify good contacts at the different stops. Its members would encourage members of their own networks to join. The committee would participate in monitoring and evaluating the project.

Timing:

- The first phase would take place over a period of 30 days, starting at least 6-8 weeks before the Legislative elections, now expected to take place in February 2009 or later. (The Caravan can not be on the ground while the parties are campaigning.)

- The second phase would take place over a period of 30 days, starting at least two months before local government elections, to be held later in 2009.

Approximate Cost:

\$35,000

- \$3000 to finance a project coordinator and other local assistance for a period of up to 6 months
- \$ 6000 in small grants for the mobilization and town hall meetings;
- \$17 000 to fund transport (fuel and 2 vehicles) for the Caravan;
- \$5 000 to fund media coverage
- \$4 000, monitoring and evaluation

(For additional details, see Appendix 2.)

7. 3 Political Party Training to Build Platforms and Impose Violence-restraining Discipline

The team recommends that BEFORE partner with other international NGOs to train political parties on (a) how to build party platforms to bind together leaders and rank and file on the party program and (b) how to build in discipline against resort to violence (for example, by the use of marshalls and party crisis committees). The project should aim at a bottom-up, participatory and consensus-building approach. A multi-stage approach should be used, initially inviting all parties, but over time winnowing down to those parties with some structure and representation in 24 (70%) of the 34 prefectures in the country.

Objectives:

- Assist political parties in the definition of their vision for Guinea's future
- Strengthen the role of the Guinean political class as a major player in promoting and implementing a peaceful democratic transition.

Partnerships:

IFES. Other possible partners might include the Friedrich Ebert or Adenauer Foundations and the Open Society Initiative of West Africa (Soros).

Target:

Active and representative political parties

Projected outcomes:

- 4-5 main political parties have developed an individual platform in a participatory fashion;
- Increased participation of party militants with an emphasis on women and youth
- Improved consensus building and democratic mechanisms within parties
- Increased understanding on the part of party militants of issues of national concern, policy and decision making
-

Methodology:

Step one: a general meeting of political parties and organizations to articulate the objective of orderly and lawful elections and establish ground-rules for BEFORE assistance: encouraging inclusive political formations and adherence to party codes of conduct, while establishing a nation-wide representational threshold (24 prefectures) for inclusion in follow-up sessions.

Step two: an instructional and preparatory meeting for parties to be included in steps 3 and 4. It would inform groups of their obligations during those steps and present a seminar on the experiences of other countries and regions in institution-building and constitutionalism. Parties active in at least 24 prefectures would initiate a participatory dialogue with rank-and-file at the prefectural and regional levels to identify policies and strategies in the sectors of governance, health, education, environment, and security.

Step three: work with qualifying parties individually, first to help them establish the parameters of platform development based on their internal deliberations and political aims, and then to draw up their platforms. (This phase would be the most expensive and time-consuming since it would require assembling party regional and district leaders and devoting close attention to government regulations and political sensibilities.)

Step four: about 4-5 main political parties would hold a national convention to ratify their platforms.

Approximate cost:

\$350,000

7. 4 Civic Education and Skills Training for Youth

The team has not come up with a concrete project proposal for youth. It recommends, however, that BEFORE keep in mind the possibility of developing a project or projects, in partnership with other international NGOs currently on the ground in Guinea, aimed at harnessing for constructive, non-violent activity the three categories of youth described above (see Preliminary Strategy, B.2). The following ideas might be incorporated:

- a. Involving youth associations, organizations, and movements in all training and assistance program intended for civil society groups;
- b. Initiating roundtables and sports activities for civilian youth, military youth, young police recruits and youth in political parties – male and female;
- c. Direct assistance to groups that focus on training and outreach to at-risk youths, particularly in cities. BEFORE could also support seminars on non-violence and political participation with the aim of alerting them to useful institutional practices and compliance with the rule of law.
- d. funding for training to meet local demand for labor and for grassroots infrastructure projects employing youth.

7. 5 Social Support for military families

The team recommends that BEFORE examine the possibility of promoting improved integration between the armed forces and the civilian population through the provision of social services to families of enlisted military personnel living in the camps and, when it is the case, of the civilian communities they live in. Most of these families have great difficulties making ends meet. Such social services, emphasizing the human factor, can enhance living standards and common community values. BEFORE could finance the training of social workers to work with military wives and their civilian neighbors in communities heavily impacted by military families. The focus would be on improving home economics (nutrition, maternal and child health, sewing and financial management) and mediation of domestic disputes. Training could also be given in rights and responsibilities and literacy. BEFORE could also finance limited supporting equipment such as sewing machines and soap-making utensils.

(For a more detailed analysis of military reform needs and related projects, see Appendix 1.)

Target:

Families of enlisted military personnel living in urban residential communities with non-military families and in urban military camps.

Objectives:

- Assist families of enlisted military personnel with health and social problems, along with their civilian neighbors.
- Promote the integration of military families into their residential communities, thereby lessening suspicion of the security forces.
- Help alleviate social problems within the camps
- Improve the quality of citizenship

Partnerships:

The Civil-Military Committee, Guinean Center for International Trade and Development (CECIDE); Senegalese Armed Forces (through the Government of Senegal) could provide training for social workers and related expertise; the Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF)

Projected Outcomes:

- 5 social workers trained to work with military and neighboring families in Conakry communes near military camps on basic nutrition, maternal and child health, sewing skills, basic budgeting, and mediation of domestic disputes.
- Monthly monitoring of the progress of the program by supervisory social workers.
- Every year the project could be extended to another administrative region (outside Conakry)

Methodology:

BEFORE would finance the training of the social workers, their wages, and the wages of the supervisory social worker.

Timing:

An initial one-year program, with provision for annual extensions, to begin mid-2009.

Approximate cost:

\$70,000

Salaries: 5 social workers, 1 supervisor: \$2500 a month: one year, \$30,000

Equipment and pedagogical tools: \$25,000

Micro loans and M&E: \$15,000

Appendix I

A Broad Program of Proposed Reforms for Guinea's Security and Defense Forces

General Lamine Cisse

Recruitment. The national security and defense forces should reflect the nation they represent. For that purpose, recruitment must be conducted across the entire population. A multi-ethnic recruitment process should be carried out and include a pro-rated representation of regional demographics. Such an approach will draw in young volunteers from across the country and give a broad national character to the Guinean armed forces. The financing of training for qualified recruits should be undertaken by donors and partner countries.

Human Resource Management. To avoid tensions and frustration among the forces, the Guinean military should develop or update regulations on the following:

- Legal length of service
- Length of tenure in the ranks and in different categories of personnel
- Promotion
- Retirement

Rehabilitation of Barracks, Military Encampments and other Military Infrastructure. During mutinies and conflicts within the armed forces, military encampments are looted and destroyed and weapons are stolen. Military personnel then take up residence in civilian residential neighborhoods and retain their weapons. Since these neighborhoods are not lighted, burglaries and armed robbery follow. The repair of military camps and barracks can be undertaken by the military itself through the corps of engineers. Donors should be engaged to provide funding for the purchase of construction materials.

Reintegration of Demobilized Troops. Guinea mobilized 6000 volunteers following the Liberian invasion of 2000. Abruptly demobilized after a year of service, the volunteers joined the ranks of the unemployed and some resorted to criminal activities using their weapon skills. These former soldiers need to be brought into income-generating activities so that they may become healthy, productive citizens. Donor and NGO assistance will be required to promote income-generating projects.

Improving Civil-Military Relations. Since the national security and defense forces operate under civil authority, they should be an integral part of the nation, and relations between the armed forces and the population should be harmonious. To improve the image of the armed forces and instill confidence in a civilian population, traumatized by mutinies and incidents of abuse of the civilian population, permanent communication channels should be created between the civilian and military populations to help the civilian population to understand the work of the armed forces and how they can

contribute to the protection and development of the country. These channels can be created through

- Television and radio broadcasts

- Projections of documentary films and video

- Organization of fairs or open house dates at military facilities for the civilian population

- Publicizing the danger of narcotic drugs and promoting anti-drug activities

Donors and international NGOs can fund the purchase of audio-visual materials.

Civil Engineering Programs. An important way to inspire civilian trust and confidence in the armed forces is to involve troops in public works projects benefiting the nation, such as

- Building roads to improve agricultural production and marketing

- Building roads to open access to remote areas

- Building bridges

These projects can be carried out by the army corps of engineers with some funding from the donors.

Military Health Care. The military should introduce a health care program which would provide partial coverage of medical costs for the armed forces and their families, including retirees. The health care plan would operate through monthly withholding from salary payments. (To be successful regular payment of salaries is essential.) Donor and NGO support could be provided by financing equipment such as prostheses and possibly financial support for the planning process.

Appendix II

Guinean Women in the Promotion of Fair Elections: The Caravan

Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff

Affirming and Reinforcing Women's Role

The important role that women have played in crisis resolution throughout Guinea's history cannot be gainsaid. From Samory Toure's mother through to labor leader Rabiátou Serah Diallo and Henriette Conte, Guinea's first lady, there are numerous examples of decisive interventions by Guinean women acting collectively or alone. Conventional wisdom has it that it was after he lost the support of the working women of Conakry that Sekou Touré's regime went into decline. The core of President Lansana Conte's political constituency is Guinean market women and traders. Community level women are very visible and loud in Guinean political life but do not hold positions of power. One of our interviewees suggested that educated women shun involvement in the rough and tumble of competitive politics but are happy to hold high office by presidential appointment. Women have in the past their considerable resources at the service of male politicians and male agendas.

All the women we spoke to raised concern about individual safety and security issues, absence of the Rule of Law, threats posed by unchecked impunity and the growing menace of crime. The perceived unwillingness of the Conté government to hold free and fair elections was described as simply another example of the pervasive impunity.

Female interviewees decried dissension among women and attributed women's lack of progress to lack of sisterly solidarity. Similar views are regularly expressed across Mano River Union countries Sierra Leone and Liberia, where nonetheless initiatives were taken that brought women together to work for and achieve common goals put forward by women overtly for women.

The stability of Guinea during the ongoing transition would be enhanced if it became the focus of concerted action by Guinean women building on the achievements of their various conflict resolution interventions during the events of January and February 2007. It is clear that Guinean women can and want to do more. Non-partisan peace-building and national cohesion provide a platform that would be non-threatening to male politicians and would provide the space for women to contribute unhindered by ethnic and other considerations. We can expect, as happened in Sierra Leone and Liberia, that provided with the necessary means and skills Guinean women will make great accomplishments in terms of reducing conflict and averting violence in Guinea in the short term as well as over the longer term.

The Caravan

BEFORE financial support should be considered for mobilizing women in a caravan of women's associations, drawing in different ethnic groups, traveling from the Forest Region to Conakry. It is proposed that the Women's Caravan be staged in two phases: The first, before the Legislative elections, which are now expected to take place in January or February 2009, and the second phase ahead of the Local Government Elections to be held later in 2009.

Both phases will use the same model: the Caravan team would make 16 or 17 stops in various prefectures on the way through the five regions. The emphasis in the first phase will be on women championing free, fair and violence-free elections, while in the second round, women's active participation in politics and promotion of an agreed woman's agenda would be the focus. Building on previous sub-regional experience, the Caravan would be used to remind Guineans of the volatility of the sub region in which they live in. It would also be an opportunity to strengthen ties with women in the other three countries of the Mano River Union (MRU) by emphasizing the common sub-regional interest in ending violence and conflict as a pre-condition to progress and welfare. To combat any lingering perceptions that democracy, women's direct action, competitive elections and *alternance* (peaceful change of government) are foreign concepts not applicable to Guinea, it is proposed that the Caravan commence with Guinean women being sensitized by their Liberian and Sierra Leonean sisters about their experiences in participating in campaigns and caravans for violence-free election campaigns in Liberia and Sierra Leone in 2002, 2005 and 2007. The Guinea Caravan would be presented as part of a series of connected sub-regional women's initiatives aimed at building peace and security and promoting credible and honest elections as a means to resolve conflict.

The proposal calls for a small group of Sierra Leonean and Liberian women from the border areas to cross the frontier and hold a day of awareness raising, experience-sharing, mobilization, coalition building and planning with Guinean women in the Forest prefectural headquarters of Gueckedou, or perhaps even in Nongoa, a sub-prefectural headquarters closer to the frontier.

Practical tips and ideas would be shared on how ordinary women can work together for violence-free elections. The focus would be on how to bring on board as many different women as possible, especially those who would not normally feel that elections and women's activism is for them. A second objective would be to bridge the gaps and divides that may exist among women based on ethnicity, religion, economic status or educational attainment by presenting an issue that is of vital importance and interest to all women.

The six women from the neighboring countries would be accompanied by a permanent team consisting of a Project Coordinator, two trained and experienced gender and community level facilitators, a small media team and an independent adviser. The Project Coordinator should consider whether the two facilitators should remain the same or be recruited from the region being visited so they can provide local knowledge, contacts and languages

At the end of a day of activities including public processions, music and drama performances, training workshops and radio programs, the women of the host prefecture should be invited to form an action committee for promoting credible, free, fair, and violence-free legislative elections and perhaps to act as independent election observers. The women should draw up a declaration of their demands for the elections to be entrusted to the Caravan for eventual delivery to Conakry. Six women would be identified to join the Caravan and take the message on to the next stop. The women from the neighboring countries would then return home.

At the next stop, in a different prefecture, the process would be repeated with the women from the last stop leading the conscious-raising activities before returning home and six new women will carry the message forward. The Caravan would wind its way through all five regions and culminate in Conakry, where after stops in one or more of the city's communes, women from all walks of life and regions would deliver the declarations collected along the way to the President, Prime Minister, the CENI, the political parties, the heads of the police and military, representatives of the international community and any other organization deemed suitable.

The permanent media team should link-up with the community radio stations in the various stops around the country to assure full coverage of the Caravan itself and also to ensure that the issues raised continue to be discussed in the public domain after the Caravan has left town. Also the national broadcasting authorities should be brought on board, if possible. The media team will also be responsible to document and provide full reports of the various activities undertaken using various media. Search for Common Ground in Guinea may be interested in such an intervention as their counterparts in Sierra Leone and Liberia have taken a lead in such activities.

An important aspect of the Caravan is that it should emanate from the periphery and move to the centre (Conakry). The Caravan is a conscious deliberate attempt to subvert the usual practice of the "Great Women of Conakry" delivering the message to the women at the base ("a la base").

The Project Coordinator would be advised and assisted by an Advisory Committee comprising representatives of national women's network who have technical expertise, presence, contacts and experience of working with women around the country. The Advisory Committee would not concern itself with the day-to-day implementation of the project but would rather be available to counsel and facilitate the work of the implementers by identifying good contacts for the Coordinator and team at the different stops. Its members should encourage members of their own networks to join the campaign. The Project Coordinator should report regularly to the Advisory Committee and give serious consideration to its suggestions. The Advisory Committee would also participate in monitoring and evaluating the project. After the legislative elections, the implementation of the first phase of the caravan would be evaluated. Lessons learned would be applied to planning and implementing the second phase of the Caravan, which would stop in those prefectures and Conakry communes not visited in the first round.

The Caravan is not intended to be a permanent structure but rather a space for deepening women's activism, collaboration and networking at, within and between different levels.

Members of the Assessment Team

Dr. Karamo Cherif, Coordinator, WANEP- Guinea

General (ret) Lamine Cisse, former Chief of Staff, Armed Forces of Senegal, former Senegalese Minister of the Interior, former Special Representative of the U.N Secretary-General for Central Africa and for West Africa

Mme. Elizabeth Côté, Director, IFES Guinea

Dr. Siba Grovogui, Professor of Political Science, Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, MD

The Honorable Yasmin Jusu-Sheriff, Human Rights Commissioner, Government of Sierra Leone

Dr. Dane F. Smith, Jr., Member, BEFORE Steering Committee for West Africa; former U.S. Ambassador to Guinea